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AUTHOR de Wolf, Gaelan Dodds
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ABSTRACT

A study compared language patterns in a group of 100 residents of Ottawa and 240 residents of Vancouver, categorized by sex, age (under or over 40), and socioeconomic status. The informants provided tape-recorded interviews of an hour or more in response to similarly-conducted questionnaires designed to elicit tokens for a large number of phonological variables by style, and 40-50 grammatical items within syntactic frames. Resulting data were computerized and analyzed statistically. Some analyses are summarized in the report. Results demonstrate the importance of social and regional factors to usage in urban Canadian English, and indicate the overall influence of age in the linguistic process. The results of the study confirm the significance of location and socioeconomic status to grammatical use, and help outline a method for delineating majority and well-educated speech within a variety or comparison of sub-regional varieties. (MSE)

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Urban Canadian English at Edges of the Continuum:*

Evidence of Linguistic Change

Gaelan Dodds de Wolf

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This paper is a result of the first comparison in Canadian English of random sampled sociodialect data from two similarly designed and concurrent major urban surveys in a Labovian (1966, 1972) model or Trudgillian (1972, 1974) framework, those of Woods (1979) for Ottawa and Gregg (1984) for Vancouver. As such, it will discuss the statistically significant variation arising from the analysis of a number of characteristic phonological variables and grammatical items at edges of this widespread dialect area (de Wolf 1988a, 1988b, forthcoming a, b, c). The salience of age as an explanatory variable in many of the analyses provides some evidence of linguistic shift and confirms for these data the crucial nature of generation in the general mechanism of linguistic change (Bynon 1977).

The Canadian regional variety of World English, as one of the nation's two official languages, has been described by Avis (1973: 45) as

... a fairly recent hybrid which resembles American English in some respects and British English in others while exhibiting much that is singularly Canadian. It is, in fact, the composite of these characteristics which gives Canadian English its unique identity.

A number of areal language studies, including a nation-wide postal survey (Scargill and Warkentyne 1972), have established the growing field of Canadian English (CE, see, for example, the bibliographies of Avis and Kinloch 1977, Bähr 1977, Loughheed 1988; also McConnell 1979). However, with the exception of pockets of regional variation, such as in the Atlantic Provinces, the Ottawa Valley, the Red River Valley, Southern Alberta and

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on Vancouver Island, Canadian English is considered remarkably homogeneous (Avis 1973, 1986, Wells 1982). Indeed, it has frequently been stated that a uniform dialect covers a wider area than that covered by any other (Priestley 1951, Woods 1979, Gregg 1981a). Chambers (1986), for example, has suggested that a ubiquitous and easily located standard accent is characteristic of Canada's linguistic identity. A standard variety, termed General Canadian, increasingly the majority speech of educated urban Canada, according to Woods (1979), stretches almost 3000 miles from the Ottawa River on the Ontario-Quebec linguistic-cultural border in the east to the Pacific Coast on the western edge of the continent, that is, from Vancouver to Ottawa, respectively, Canada's third and fourth largest census metropolitan areas (Statistics Canada 1984).

Though closely related to Northern American (Bloomfield 1948, Woods 1986; cf. Scargill 1957), Canadian English from the beginning has pursued an independent development in the lexicon which is noted for the creativity of its coinages (Harris 1975, Scargill 1977, Gregg 1979, Bailey 1982). The phonology also possesses a distinctive, ten-vowel, three-diphthong phonemic pattern, along with the phenomenon theoretically known as Canadian Raising (Joos 1942, Halle 1962, Chomsky and Halle 1968, Avis 1973, Chambers 1973, 1979, Gregg 1973a, 1981a, Paradis 1980). Chambers (1986) has remarked on a few of the unusual syntactic constructions although, as in other varieties of World English, the standard grammar remains remarkably conservative.

Like many modern nations, Canada itself has a relatively brief urban history. Following the Confederation in 1867 of two eastern and two Maritime provinces (Brown 1987), the population demographics shifted dramatically within a hundred-year period, that is, from 20% urban in 1871 to 76% urban in 1971/1981 (Statistics Canada 1984). Though the rapid process of urbanization has since reversed somewhat, approximately three-quarters of the country's almost 26 million inhabitants currently reside in metropolitan areas of 100,000 or more, about 40% of these in cities of more than half a

million. Thus, despite the newer ex-urban drift, the long-term effects of metropolitanization on regional culture in general and on linguistic levelling in particular should not be underestimated in such a vast country in which a large percentage of the comparatively small population resides in close cultural proximity to the Northern dialect area of the United States.

In addition to a mixed settlement pattern which offers two competing models of standard language usage that are often based on social and attitudinal factors (Harris and Stevenson 1978, Gulden 1979, Gregg 1981a, Warkentyne and Brett 1981a, 1981b, Warkentyne 1983, de Wolf and Hasebe-Ludt 1987), there are at least two views of what constitutes an urban or regional standard in Canada (Avis 1973, Gregg 1973b; Bähr 1976): is it, for example, the speech of the majority or that of the educated?

To answer that question from the data, a combination of approaches seems necessary. Though adhering to the principles of social and regional dialectology in which geographic area, political boundaries, patterns of settlement and immigration along with the social background of the native speaker are paramount (Davis 1983), each study (i.e., Woods 1979, Gregg 1984) also applied the sociolinguistic techniques originally developed by Labov (1963, 1966) and enhanced by Trudgill (1974) in which it is hypothesized that quantifiable and variable linguistic data from a representative sample of urban informants socially graded by an objective scale, will co-vary measurably, according to stylistic context, with selected sociological parameters.

While the methodologies of both the Woods (1979) and Gregg (1984) surveys have been reported elsewhere,¹ a brief review is in order. Obtained by a stratified random sample in each city according to categories of age, sex and socio-economic status, the cell-grouped informants, 100 in Ottawa and 240 in Vancouver, provided tape-recorded interviews of an hour or more to a fieldworker in response to similarly constructed questionnaires designed to elicit tokens for a very large number of phonological variables

by style and between forty and fifty grammatical items within syntactic frames. The computerized data bases were then analysed individually through a statistical programme package (de Wolf 1988a, 1988b, forthcoming a, b).

For the present two-city comparison, simple dichotomies of age (40 and over: Old; under 40: Young), sex, socio-economic status (SES: High and Low, with post-secondary education an index indicator for those of high status), and location were utilized for the analysis in SAS (Helwig 1985) which, on advice, combined the pertinent data files from each survey. For the phonological investigation, tokens of a variable -- defined by Trudgill (1974) as a linguistic item in co-variation with one or more sociological parameters or with another variable - were collected by using identical words according to style. This presented a rigorous restriction and severely limited the comparison of styles as well as the number of available variables. One variant from each variable, designated as standard, was then selected for the analysis of proportional data by means of ANOVA for a single style and MANOVA for the contrast between styles. When feasible, variables were also examined by breakdown into morphological or syntactic categories or, as in the case of the Canadian diphthongs, by an environment which coincided with that of intervocalic voicing. Tables 1 to 3 below represent the summary tables of a weighted average across style.

The grammatical variants, listed in Table 4, were elicited from similar syntactic frames; only the most frequent variants, however, were tested through logistic regression. In all, eight phonological variables and the variants from thirty grammatical items were examined (de Wolf 1988b, forthcoming a, b, c).

The phonological variables, listed in Table 1, include two closely related instances of intervocalic voicing, in which an underlying /t/ becomes voiced between vowels or following /n/, as in *beautiful*, or *plenty*, that is, the variables (VtV) and (ntV) (Avis 1973, Woods 1979, Gregg 1984); the Canadian Raising of two of the three vowel diphthongs

Table 1. Standard Value Mean Percent: Locational Differences (Ottawa and Vancouver) for the Weighted Average Across Style for Selected Phonological Variables in Canadian English.

Variable Description	Ottawa Mean %	Vancouver Mean %	Mean % Difference
(VtV)			
(a) all items+	41	47	6
(b) single words+	40	48	8
(c) monomorphemes**	38	47	9
(d) formative boundary++	interaction only	interaction only	-
(ntV)*			
single words	69	78	9
(ing)*			
(a) all items [+ going]	54	81	27
(b) all items [- going]	56	82	26
(c) verbals [+ going]	44	81	37
(d) verbals [- going]	47	84	37
(e) merged /ɪŋ + in/ [+ going]	58	90	32
(f) merged /ɪŋ + in/ [- going]	59	92	33
(ʌu)*			
(a) all items	70	93	23
(b) (ʌuC)	75	93	18
(əi)*			
(a) all items	66	94	28
(b) (əiC)	71	96	25
(c) (əitV)	60	93	33
(ju)**	49	57	8
(hw)	interaction only	interaction only	-
(ɒ)*	81	55	26

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .001$

+ significant at $\alpha = .01$

++ significant at $\alpha = .05$

before voiceless consonants, as in *house* and *write*, the variables (ʌu) and (əi), respectively; the alternation of morpheme- or suffix-final *-ing*, as in *something* or *meeting*, a variable also, according to Wells (1982), in most varieties of World English;

the allophonic variation of [ju] with [u], as in *Duke*, and [ʷ] with [w], as in *what*, respectively, the variables (ju) and (hw) (Woods 1979, de Wolf 1983), and the phonetic realization of the low back vowel in *cot/caught*, which is slightly rounded in CE, the variable (ɒ) (Scott 1939, Woods 1979; also de Wolf 1988a, 1988b).

The tested value or standard variant of each variable is shown in the left-hand column of Table 3. With the exception of the variables (ing) and (ntV) with three main variants apiece, that is, [ɪŋ ~ ɪn ~ ɪn] for (ing), and /t, d, ʔ/ for (ntV), each variable had two main values, e.g., /t/ ~ /d/ for (VtV); [ʌu] and [aʊ], [əɪ] and [aɪ] for the respective Canadian diphthongs (ʌu) and (əɪ), [ju] ~ [u] for (ju), [ʷ] and [w] for (hw), and a low back slightly rounded [ɒ], or unrounded vowel [ɑ], the latter common in varieties of American English, for the variable (ɒ).

The results of the tests of significance for almost all of the items examined did not confirm the null hypothesis of no co-variation between linguistic variants and the social and regional factors (de Wolf 1988b). In fact, for many of the items the p-value was much less than .01, indicating that there was a reasonably slim chance of lack of association with the linguistic value in question (see Fasold 1984). It is possible then to assess the relative frequency of co-occurrence of each explanatory variable with the linguistic variables in order to ascertain the extent of an individual factor's influence.

For the phonological variables, the factors significant in the usage of the standard value were ranked in terms of their repeated appearance. Table 1 then indicates the importance of location or geographic area to phonological variability. In seven of the eight variables, or almost 90%, region was significant (de Wolf 1988a, 1988b). For the weighted average across style, major areal differences of 20% or more were present in half of the eight variables, i.e., the Canadian diphthongs (ʌu) and (əɪ), the variable (ɒ), and (ing) which shows much geographic variation according to Wells (1982), and some grammatical conditioning as recently reported by Labov (1989).

The category of age, however, the next most common factor, provides evidence for this discussion. Table 2 reveals that for three-quarters of the phonological variables generation was significant, indicating a change in apparent time (Labov 1963, 1966, 1972). Only the variable (ntV) was generationally stable in each style. (The variable (p) displayed some sensitivity to the age variable in two styles: Reading Passage through interaction effects, and in the Word List with a 9% generational distinction and more [ɑ] usage among the older group.) Particularly wide differences can be seen for the variables (VtV) and (hw) which, as Avis (1956) and Gregg (1957a, 1957b; see also 1988) suggested a generation ago, were then in a process of change. With means of less than 50%, the traditional value in each case is definitely faltering in both areas. According to Gregg (1988), a merger of the two variants of the variable (hw) has now occurred in three-quarters of Canadian speakers.

With respect to stylistic contrast, cell-group behaviour for three variables, (VtV), (ju) and (hw), was consistent between cities. However, only the variable (VtV) displayed significant response differences between styles, with percentages ranging from Reading Passage, the least formal, at 19%, to Picture and Word List at 29% and 51%, respectively, and on to the most formal Minimal Contrast at 81%. Both practically and theoretically, this wide style shift then indicates some social evaluation of the feature on the part of the informants, a conscious or subconscious awareness of its changing status (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1974).

Although both the variables (VtV) and (ju) were each subject to the separate influence of all four factors, that is, in gender- and status-based usage, and in age change and regional distinctions, the overall means for the standard value of (ju) were somewhat higher. With no significant stylistic contrast, this variable, from the perspective of generation, is seemingly much more stable than (VtV), although it would appear that the variant [ju] is in a somewhat stately decline (de Wolf 1988a, 1988b).

Table 2. Standard Value Mean Percent: Generational Differences (Young and Old) for the Weighted Average Across Style for Selected Phonological Variables in Canadian English.

Variable Description	Young Mean %	Old Mean %	Mean % Difference
(VtV)*			
(a) all items	34	54	20
(b) single words	34	55	21
(c) monomorphemes	32	55	23
(d) formative boundary	41	60	19
(ing)			
(a) all items [+ going]+	68	78	10
(b) all items [- going]+	69	79	10
(c) verbals [+ going]++	70	71	1
(d) verbals [- going]++	68	78	10
(e) merged /ɪŋ + ɪn/ [+ going]+	77	85	8
(f) merged /ɪŋ + ɪn/ [- going]+	78	86	8
(Au)+			
(a) all items	83	89	6
(b) (AuC)	84	91	7
(əi)			
(a) all items**	81	90	9
(b) (əiC)**	84	93	9
(c) (əitV)	interaction only	interaction only	-
(ju)+	50	60	10
(hw)*	10	37	27

Old = 40 and over
Young = Less than 40

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .001$

+ significant at $\alpha = .01$

++ significant at $\alpha = .05$

A summary of the statistically significant influences for a weighted average across style of all eight phonological variables is shown in Table 3 where usage according to cell group illustrates the overall variant status in the two cities, confirming, in part, Chambers (1986) assertion of a majority accent. It should be noted also that, in general, except for the variable (hw), educated usage - defined here by SES - coincided with

majority speech. Table 3 also shows the changing status of the variants of (VtV) and (ju)

Table 3. Phonological Variant Usage by Significant Factor for a Weighted Average Across Style: All Items.

Standard Value	Majority Usage	Less than Half	A Third or Less†
/VtV/	Female*, Old*, High*	Male*, Low*, Vancouver, Ottawa***/	Young*
/ntV/	Female, Male*/ High, Low**/ Vancouver, Ottawa*/	-	-
/ɪŋ/	Female, Male***/ Old, Young***/ Vancouver, Ottawa*	-	-
[ɔu]	Male, Female***/ Old, Young***/ Vancouver, Ottawa*/	-	-
[əɪ]	Old, Young**/ Vancouver, Ottawa*/	-	-
[ju]	Female*, High*** Old, Young+/ Vancouver+	Male*, Low***, Ottawa+	-
[ʌ]	-	Old*	High, Low**/ Young*
[ɒ]	Ottawa, Vancouver*/	-	-

†Approximate figures only

* $p < .0001$

** $p < .001$

*** $p < .005$

+ significant at $\alpha = .01$

regionally and socially and the decline in usage of the variable (hw).

With respect to the grammatical items, Table 4 summarizes the dominant influence of socio-economic status as a factor in the analysis of these variants. Nevertheless, as a comparison of Tables 1, 2 and 4 will show, for both 75% of the phonological variables and 20 out of 23 (or 87%) of the variable grammatical items, age was a common factor,

providing independent confirmation of the strength of generation in the system of change.

Concerning specific grammatical items, wide regional divergence occurred among the verb forms, e.g., the preterites of *sneak* and *dive*, and the past participle of *drink*. Strong locational differences were also present in the prepositional object usage of *between you and me/I, to whom/who ... to*, and in the case of the (roughly grouped) modifiers such as *really* versus *real*, *anyway/anyways* and *fewer/less* plus count noun (de Wolf 1988b, forthcoming b, c).

Along with other factors, age proved to be significant in these analyses as well. A few examples will provide valid evidence of linguistic change: the present perfect of *drink*, and prepositional object usage with *between* and *to*.

With respect to the usage of *has drunk* versus *has drank*, Scargill (1974) noted an ongoing confusion between the past tense and the past participle (see also Avis 1953). Data from the 1972 Scargill and Warkentyne postal survey of Canadian English by province recorded some generational difference between parents and their high school-aged children nationally, with an overall average response to *has drunk* in both B.C. and Ontario of almost 50%. This may be contrasted then with the figures (not shown) from the two more recent surveys in which Ottawa informants had a 64% mean for *has drunk*, an increase of 15% over the provincial figures, whereas Vancouverites remained at the former average of around 48%. Across location, however, in both cities the young displayed an equal fondness for the two variants at 45%.

Statistically speaking, Table 5 demonstrates a regional shift in the use of *has drunk* on the basis of age and socio-economic status, with an age difference of close to 20% in Vancouver. Widespread status-based distinctions are also noteworthy, particularly in Ottawa. However, when compared with their provincial counterparts of a few years

Table 4. Significant Factors in the Use of Grammatical Variants.*

Grammatical Item	Location	Sex	Age	SES	Interaction Effects
<u>Preterite</u>					
lay/laid			XX	XX	XX
sneaked/snuck		X	XX	XX	XX
dived/dove	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
<u>Present Perfect</u>					
drunk/drank			XX	XX	XX
proved/proven	XX	X	X	XX	XX
lain/laid	X	X	XX	XX	XX
<u>Pluperfect</u>					
had/would've, had've	X	XXX	XXX	XX	XXX
had (use)	XX		XX	XX	XX
<u>Subjunctive</u>					
if I were/was	XX	XX			XX
if it were/was		XX	XX	XX	XX
<u>Variants</u>					
have you (got)/do you have				XX	XXX
am I not/aren't I	XX		XX	X	XX
used not/never used to	XX			XX	XXX
lend/loan (lex.)			XX	XX	XX
<u>Agreement</u>					
there are/there's	XX		XX	XX	X
where are/where's			X	XX	XX
<u>Modifiers</u>					
fewer/less	XX		XX	XX	X
really/real	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
anyway/anyways	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
<u>Preposition + object</u>					
between J. and me/I		X	X	XX	XX
between you and me/I	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
to ... me/I			XX	XX	XX
to whom/who ... to	XX		XX	XX	XX

* significant at $\alpha = .05$

An x indicates the significant occurrence of a factor in the analyses of particular variants in a grammatical item.

before, the means for the young in Vancouver at 38% appear to have remained stable, whereas those of the Vancouver old and both Ottawa groups have increased! As these results cannot be directly compared, it seems safe to infer that some generational change is in progress, especially in Vancouver, where women responded with more than

Table 5. Location x Age*/Location x SES** (1) 'Has drunk'.

		Vancouver			Ottawa		
		#	%	N	#	%	N
Age:	Old	77	57	136	33	73	45
	Young	39	38	104	31	61	51
SES:	Low	39	33	120	17	45	38
	High	77	64	120	47	81	58

* significant at $\alpha = .01$

** significant at $\alpha = .05$

40% has drunk.

With respect to the first person prepositional object pronoun following *between*, the national survey of 1972 (Scargill 1974) showed age differences in usage in both provinces. However, in each case, the parents demonstrated a preference for the *I* form, and the students for the standard variant, with over 50% use in Ontario, and close to 60% in B.C. In both the Vancouver and Ottawa surveys, overall usage was about evenly divided between *me* and *I*. However, the statistical breakdown in Table 6 shows that, despite the wide differences in prestige use, an apparent change to *I* as prepositional object has occurred among the young in both Ottawa and Vancouver, with only the young of high status in Ottawa holding back. A regional shift in interaction with social factors is thus indicated. While the status-based differences were well-preserved in each city, the young of high status in Vancouver were much less conservative of the traditionally standard variant and showed a greater divergence from those over forty of high status in

Table 6. SES*/Age x SES*/Location x Age x SES* (1) 'Between John and me' (2) 'Between John and I'.

	Variant 1			Variant 2	
	#	%	N	#	%
SES:					
Low	49	31	157	102	65
High	104	58	180	70	39
Old Low	32	37	87	52	60
Old High	69	71	97	26	27
Young Low	17	24	70	50	71
Young High	35	42	83	44	53
Vancouver Old Low	26	37	71	43	61
Vancouver Old High	48	74	65	15	23
Vancouver Young Low	13	28	47	31	66
Vancouver Young High	21	38	55	31	56
Ottawa Old Low	6	38	16	9	56
Ottawa Old High	21	66	32	11	34
Ottawa Young Low	4	17	23	19	83
Ottawa Young High	14	50	28	13	46

* $p < .0001$

that city than did their peers in Ottawa.

In Table 7 this regional difference on the basis of age can also be seen following the preposition *to*, even though one-half of the respondents in each city used the pronoun *me*. While *me* was not majority usage among the young in either city (see variant 2), in Vancouver, it was common to only one-third of the young. Although wide status-based differences on the basis of gender occurred in both cities, the conservative influence of women did not appear to be retarding change.

These examples and the illustrative tables demonstrate then the importance of social and regional factors to usage in urban Canadian English and indicate the overall influence of age in the linguistic process. Confirming for dialectology the significance of location to regional accent (Abercrombie 1965, Macaulay 1973), and of socio-economic status to grammatical use (McDavid and McDavid 1986), the results of the analyses of the random

Table 7. Location x Age**/Location x Sex x SES* (1) 'To ... me' (2) 'To ... I'.

	Variant 1			Variant 2	
	#	%	N	#	%
Vancouver Old	88	65	136	47	35
Vancouver Young	34	33	103	67	65
Ottawa Old	30	67	45	15	33
Ottawa Young	21	43	49	28	57
Vancouver Women Low	22	37	60	36	60
Vancouver Women High	39	65	60	20	33
Vancouver Men Low	21	35	60	39	65
Vancouver Men High	40	68	59	19	32
Ottawa Women Low	10	43	23	13	57
Ottawa Women High	21	72	29	8	28
Ottawa Men Low	8	57	14	6	43
Ottawa Men High	12	43	28	16	57

* $p < .001$ ** significant at $\alpha = .01$

sampled dialect data have also outlined a method for delineating majority and educated speech within a variety or in a comparison of sub-regional varieties (de Wolf 1988b, forthcoming c). The significant co-variation of the selected factors with a number of variable items in a particular branch of World English is evidence of the power of an adapted Labovian model in suggesting areas of change.

NOTES

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1. See, for example, Murdoch 1978, Woods 1979, Gregg 1984, 1988, Gregg (et al.) 1981b, 1985, Esling 1986, 1989, de Wolf 1985, 1988a, 1988b, forthcoming b, d, de Wolf and Hasebe-Ludt 1988, and Richards 1988.

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